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AN  
ESSAY  
ON  
DUELLING.

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BY WILLIAM JAY,  
OF BEDFORD, NEW-YORK.

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FOR WHICH THE GOLD MEDAL WAS AWARDED, BY THE  
SAVANNAH ANTI-DUELLING ASSOCIATION.

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SAVANNAH:

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE ASSOCIATION.

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1829.



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AT the Anniversary of the Savannah Anti-Duelling Association, on the 8th, of January, 1828, the following resolution was passed.

*Resolved*, That a premium of Fifty Dollars, or a Gold Medal of that value, be offered by this Association for the best Essay on DUELLING, and that a Committee be appointed to circulate a notice of the same, and to decide upon the merits of such essays as may be presented. The Committee appointed are :

JOHN CUMMING, JAMES M. WAYNE, R. W. HABERSHAM, WILLIAM LAW, & M. H. M'ALLISTER.

At a meeting of the Association on the 15th, Jan. 1829, the Committee reported that twenty-one Essays had been received by C. W. ROCKWELL, Esq. the Secretary, the merits of several of which would well entitle them to publication, but that the funds of the Society are inadequate to authorise it. Three of the essays were by unanimous consent selected, to be put in competition for the premium, and the one to which it has been awarded, is discovered to be the production of MR. WILLIAM JAY, of Bedford, in the State of New-York. The Committee recommend that it be published.

*Extract from the Minutes.*

CHS. W. ROCKWELL,

*Secty.*





## AN ESSAY ON DUELLING.

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THE attempt to remove ancient and widely extended prejudices, although arduous, is not always hopeless. The opinions of mankind, like their works, are seldom permanent, and the acquisition of knowledge, frequently constrains us to abandon long cherished opinions, and to adopt very different ones in their place.

Religious toleration, which is now so generally admitted to be the right of all, was at one time supposed to be contrary to the precepts of christianity; and the magistrate was exhorted to use his sword, for the destruction of heresy. That our intercourse with the Aborigines of our country, ought to be governed by the principles of justice and humanity, will at the present day, be denied by none: but such an admission, however true and obvious, is comparatively novel. In 1755, the Colony of Massachusetts, being at war with certain Indian tribes, Governor Shirley, with the approbation of both Houses of the Legislature, issued a

proclamation, offering a bounty of £20, for the scalps of Indian children under the age of twelve years!\*

No individual would now dare to insult the moral sense of the community, by proposing a measure so atrocious. In the almost universal abolition and execration of the slave trade, a trade which the constitution of our country specially protected till within the last twenty years, and which our laws now punish with death, we have another striking instance of the triumph of education and religious influence, over long established, and even interested prejudices. These examples, and others that might be adduced, of radical changes in public opinion, encourage us to hope that the time may arrive when the duellist will share in the contempt and abhorrence to which the slave trade is now consigned.

Public sentiment in a free country will ever be omnipotent, and when rightly directed, will prove more efficacious in correcting erroneous opinions and practices, than all the penalties that law can inflict. No sooner shall public sentiment unequivocally declare itself hostile to duelling, than this relic of barbarism will vanish; for duellists themselves, will quail beneath its frown. Every effort therefore, however feeble, to draw the attention of the public to the evils of duelling, may have some influence in promoting its suppression. When the community generally are convinced that this practice is both wicked and absurd, they will cease to countenance it. This conviction however is to be effected, not by angry declamation, or

\*See the New York Mercury of 25d. July 1755.

personal invective, but by calm and frequent appeals to the understanding and the conscience.

While the immorality of duelling is generally admitted, the extent and nature of its sinfulness is as generally overlooked; and many who condemn it in principle, still regard it as an evil which the state of society renders unavoidable, and therefore excusable. To him who makes the revelation of his Maker, the rule of his conduct, arguments are unnecessary to prove, that it can never be right to yield obedience to the customs of men, rather than to the commands of God.

Unfortunately however, there are many who have not been led by education or reflection to apply the precepts of the Bible, to duelling. It may be useful to direct the attention of such persons, to the plain and positive injunctions, and the awful denunciations of the sacred volume.

All false religions have been accommodated to the corrupt passions of their votaries, but the religion of the Bible, proceeding from a Being no less infinite in holiness, than in wisdom and power, is intended to control, and not to gratify our evil propensities—propensities which cannot be indulged, without impairing our present, and endangering our future happiness.—Hence one striking peculiarity of this religion, is its prohibition of all malevolence. Revenge, which by the nations of antiquity was regarded as nearly allied to virtue, is by the religion of the Bible denounced as a crime, and we are solemnly assured, “if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you, your trespasses.” We are urged to the ex-



ercise of benevolence towards others, by the consideration of the divine goodness towards ourselves. "Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one-another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." "If any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so do ye." As forgiveness of injuries is thus enjoined, so of course revenge is forbidden. "See that none render evil for evil against any man." "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay saith the Lord."

Not only does the Gospel inculcate forgiveness of injuries, but with a sublimity of doctrine peculiarly its own, and which indicates its divine origin, it requires us even to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them which despitefully use us, and persecute us; and it enforces these commands by this beautiful and affecting illustration, "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." These texts, and many more that might be cited, prove that forgiveness of injuries, is required of us, not merely as a duty, but as an indispensable condition of the pardon of our own offences. It therefore deeply concerns the duellist to inquire, whether he can reconcile the passions which drive him to the field, with these great and solemn precepts of the Bible; whether he can take the life of his enemy, and still hope to be forgiven.

Not only are the passions indulged by the duellist, forbidden, but the very act to which they prompt him,

is prohibited in the most express terms, and under the most awful denunciations. One of the reasons assigned for the destruction of the antediluvian world was, that it was "filled with violence," and one of the first commands given by the Almighty, after the waters of the deluge had proclaimed him an avenging God, was, "whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." The injunction "thou shalt not kill," was announced by the voice of the Deity himself amid the sublime terrors of Sinai, and by his hand twice engraven on stone. The Jewish government was a theocracy, and the laws relating to murder mark the abhorrence in which this crime was held by the divine lawgiver; "Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer; he shall surely be put to death." "Blood defileth the land, and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it." The sanctions of the Mosaic laws were generally of a temporal nature, and it was reserved for the Gospel to vindicate the divine sovereignty, by withdrawing the veil which concealed the future world, and exhibiting the penalties inflicted there, for the transgressions committed here. The declarations, "no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him," and "murderers shall not inherit eternal life," derive a most impressive confirmation from the sublime vision in the Apocalypse, in which Christ is represented as sitting on his throne, and proclaiming "He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son; but murderers shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Were we not acquainted with the deceitfulness of the human heart, we should imagine it impossible that any one who acknowledges the scriptures as a divine revelation, should ever venture to engage in a duel; and yet it would not consist with candor to assert, that every duellist is an infidel; or that when advancing to the field, he abandons all expectation of happiness beyond the grave. That the great mass of duellists are at least practical infidels, and are reckless of future retribution, is abundantly evinced by the general tenor of their lives: still there are many, who while they profess a belief in the Bible, and hope to participate in the blessings it reveals, nevertheless regard duelling as an offence, for which circumstances will afford a sufficient apology. Such persons will not readily consent to apply to duelling, the denunciations of scripture against murder. But however unwilling they may be to incur the guilt and odium of murder, both the language of the Bible, and the plain common sense of mankind, unite in giving this name to their crime; and the laws, not only of our own, but of every civilized country, regard the man who kills his antagonist in a duel, as a murderer.

It may however be asked, if the duellist be in fact a murderer, why is he not abhorred and treated as such? to this it may be replied, that as respects the Deity, so far as we can form an opinion from the revelation He has been pleased to make of his will, we are constrained to believe, that by Him the duellist is abhorred and treated as a murderer. It is true, that various causes have combined to induce mankind in



general, to view this species of murder with more indulgence than assassination. The antiquity of the practice, the rank usually held in society by those who engage in it, and above all, the personal danger with which it is accompanied, tend to divest duelling of a large portion of that atrocity and cowardly baseness, which most frequently belong to assassination. But a little reflection will convince us, that these circumstances can have little, if any effect, in mitigating its moral guilt. If duelling is to be excused on account of the length of time it has been practised, so may fratricide; since it occurred in the first family on earth. The rank of an offender, may to a certain degree, exempt his crime from the reproach of vulgarity, but it cannot diminish his guilt in the view of that Being, who is no respecter of persons. Nor can we suppose that the general prevalence of any crime, will be regarded as an apology for its commission, by that holy and jealous God who brought a deluge on a guilty world, and rained down fire upon the cities of the plain. Still less can we imagine that the publicity and audacity of a crime, can extenuate its sinfulness. Admitting every duellist to be brave, it cannot be denied, that courage, so far from being a virtue, is often associated with the vilest and most detestable actions. In the revolt of Satan we have an instance of desperate daring—a recklessness of consequences to which human exploits can afford no parallel. The pirate and the highwayman, often encounter perils from which most duellists would shrink with terror. Every duellist hopes to escape with impunity, and his courage there,

fore, is vastly inferior to that of those, who, to gratify their revenge, rush upon certain death. There are many instances, in which assassins have given the fatal blow under circumstances, which they well knew would inevitably consign them to a painful and ignominious execution: such high resolve, firmness of nerve, and contempt of pain and death, are unequalled in the annals of duelling; and if these qualities are in themselves deserving of applause, the most determined duellist must yield the palm, to such assassins as Ravalliac and Fenton.

In a question of so much moment, as whether duelling is or is not murder—a question involving interests more enduring than time, and sufferings and enjoyments surpassing human imagination—it becomes us to lay aside all idle declamation, and all the prejudices derived from the customs and associations of the world, and to bring the inquiry to the only sure tests,—reason and scripture.

It is true that duellists, occasionally, while they expose their own lives, refuse to take those of their opponents; but these are such rare exceptions to the general practice, that we need not now examine them; and even in these cases, if the guilt of murder be avoided, that of suicide is incurred.

It will be admitted, that the immediate object of two persons engaged in a duel, whatever may be their propelling motives, is to kill each other: by the common consent and understanding of mankind, the deliberate and malicious taking of human life, is murder: it is in vain therefore to urge the antiquity, and the general

prevalence of the practice, or the customs of society, to distinguish duelling from murder. Nor can the personal danger to which the duellist exposes himself, make the distinction: it would be an insult to any court, to contend, that the soldier who had shot his officer on parade, had not committed murder because the time and place he had selected for perpetrating the act, proved that he had voluntarily placed his own life in jeopardy. Equally absurd would it be to agree, that killing a person in a duel was not murder, because the party slain had consented to his own death. So far is this from being true in fact, that duellists often resort to expedients to save their lives. But admitting the assertion, yet no man by his mere consent, can justify another in taking his life; and he who should aid in the commission of suicide, would unquestionably be adjudged a murderer.

The only plea in behalf of duelling that is not obviously false and absurd, is, that it is practised, not for revenge, but in self defence. This plea merits, and shall receive, a full and candid examination. The moral sense of mankind, revolts at the sacrifice of human life for the gratification of revenge, and the perpetrator, in every civilized country, doomed to an ignominious death. It is not therefore surprising that duellists should disavow motives, that would reduce them to the level of the vilest felons, and expose them to the execration of their fellow-men; hence they seek to excuse themselves by an alledged obligation to obey, what they are pleased to call, the laws of honor; and by the right and duty of preserving even at the



cost of another's life, a reputation, on which, they affirm, their future usefulness and happiness, and even personal security depend.

When however we come to investigate the origin, and attending circumstances, of most duels, we shall be disposed to question the sincerity of this disclaimer of malignant motives. All duels are founded on an alledged injury received, and the offending party is required to give "satisfaction," as it is called, by allowing the person aggrieved an opportunity of taking his life. It is certainly difficult to discriminate between such a demand, and a desire for revenge; and still more so, to reconcile the demand itself, with those divine precepts, of long suffering and forgiveness, which have been already cited. It is not pretended that the laws of honor, sanguinary as they are, require more, than that each party should give proof of his courage by hazarding his life, and after this proof has been given, a reconciliation is permitted. If then, duellists act only in obedience to these laws, and are not impelled by revenge, how comes it that each party so generally aims at the other, and that after a fire has been given and received, and of course the requisitions of honor fully satisfied, the combat is often prolonged, till one or the other is disabled? Instances have occurred, in which the parties, in the interval between the challenge and the duel, have practised in shooting at a mark, to ensure a more deadly aim. It is difficult to imagine a stronger proof than this, of what the law denominates *malice prepense*, a cool deliberate intention of taking life, and a calculating use of the requis-

its means. In such cases, it would be folly to deny the existence of a fixed purpose of revenge; and although the evidence of malice may not be equally obvious in every instance, yet the fact, that the duellist deliberately endeavours to take the life of his enemy, after having calmly made his preparations for the purpose, after having advised with a friend on the subject, and after having entertained the design for days, and sometimes for months, affords proof of settled malice, more strong and conclusive, than is usually offered in trials for murder; and if such proof is to be rejected, then all the rules of evidence by which human tribunals are guided, and by which we are accustomed to judge of the conduct of our fellow-men, are vague and deceptive. Let not the duellist then flatter himself, that while his hands are imbrued in his brother's blood, his heart is unpolluted by malice—O let him not venture his all, on a conceit so vain and delusive.

It must not be supposed that the preceding remarks apply only to him who seeks the combat, and that he who merely accepts a challenge, is exempted from the charge of malice, and the guilt of murder. The challenge is given for a real or supposed injury received: if the injury be real, the malice that prompted it must be greatly aggravated by the infliction of a still greater injury, the taking of life itself. He who first insults or slanders his neighbour, and then attempts to shed his blood, will in vain plead, that he is free from all malignant feelings. Admitting however that no real or intentional injury had been committed, the challenger in such a case obviously labours under a mis-

take and by the code of duellists themselves ; an explanation, or a disclaimer of offensive intentions, renders a combat unnecessary. Yet the party challenged, rather than condescend to speak the truth, deliberately aims his weapon at the life of a man who has given him no cause for offence ; and the apology offered for this act is, that it was not prompted by irritated passions or violent provocations, but solely by a wish to avoid all suspicion of a want of courage. He who challenges his opponent, may at least plead the vehemence of his passions, and the outrages he has suffered ; but he who accepts it, is destitute of even this poor excuse, and the malignity of his heart, is aggravated, by the absence of all other motives than a selfish and cowardly solicitude about the opinions of others.

It may be asked, what other alternative is left to a person who is challenged, than either to accept it, or by refusing it, to expose himself to obloquy ? A plain unsophisticated man, whose ideas of right and wrong are derived, not from the maxims of the world, but from the revelation of his Maker, will never be at a loss to discover his duty on receiving a challenge. If the injury complained of be imaginary or unintentional, he will frankly and honestly make such explanations as truth and justice, and a due regard for another's feelings, may require. If the injury however be real, but one which he had a right to inflict ; as the exposure of the true character of a candidate for office, or a censure of public measures, he will without hesitation avow and justify his conduct ; asserting his rights, and refusing to be called to account for exercising them.



Should his conscience however tell him that passion or inadvertence, had betrayed him into unwarrantable expressions or behaviour, he will with the same fearless and simple adherence to truth, confess his error, and acknowledge his sorrow for it. Those who do not see in such conduct, more true honor and magnanimity, than in that sullen and revengeful silence, which is broken only by the acceptance of a challenge, have reason to fear, that their own moral sense is lamentably depraved.

Having examined the disclaimer made by duellists, of malignant intentions, we are now to consider the truth of the assertion, that the practice we are condemning, is resorted to by them as a measure of self-defence; it being under certain circumstances, indispensable, not merely to their reputation, but even to their exemption from future indignities.

It may not be improper here to remark, that this apology can in no way avail the seconds to a duel, as it is not pretended that *they* are compelled by a regard, either to their reputation, or to their personal safety, to countenance and assist their friends in taking each other's lives. If duelling be a crime, those who voluntarily aid in its commission, cannot be guiltless; nor can they find an excuse for their conduct, in the fact, that they harbour no resentful feelings towards those whom they are leading, and not unfrequently urging, to mortal combat. Human laws would adjudge him guilty of murder, who should wilfully furnish an assassin with weapons to effect his deadly purpose; and at that awful tribunal to which we are all hasten-

ing, we have every reason to believe, that the seconds in a duel, will be regarded as deeply criminal.

Were we to assent to the assertion of duellists, that their reputation, usefulness, and even personal safety, sometimes require them to give or receive a challenge, it would not follow as they seem to suppose, that duelling must therefore be justifiable. There are many cases in which duty may require us, not merely to disregard the good opinion of others, but even to sacrifice our lives and fortunes. History affords us frequent illustrations of this truth, in the self devotion of patriots, who have voluntarily endured disgrace, poverty and death, in the cause of their country. Self-defence does not justify every act, to which it may prompt: on the contrary, he who to avoid the penalties due to his crimes, should accuse an innocent person, would be justly and universally execrated. But when we bring this plea to the test of christian morality, its fallacy is still more obvious. If the commands of the Creator be paramount to the opinions of his weak and erring creatures—if to barter the soul, even for the whole world, be the extreme no less of folly than of wickedness, then surely the expectation of establishing a reputation for courage, or the hope of avoiding future insult, cannot warrant the infraction of a divine command. The christian martyr, when required to scatter a few grains of incense upon the altar of an idol, rejected with disdain the proffered rewards of compliance, and joyfully endured all the ignominy and suffering with which his persecutors could load him, rather than violate the allegiance he had

pledged to his divine master. The opinions, the distinctions, the pleasures of the world; even the ties of kindred, and of friendship, were unable to detain him, a voluntary victim, from the stake or the scaffold. The principles professed by the duellist, would have rendered him, in the early ages of the church, a recreant apostate. He acknowledges the world as his master, and to acquire or preserve its applause, is ready to hazard his life; while he indignantly refuses to submit to the slightest indignity, from regard to the commands of his maker. Whether the conduct of the martyr, or the duellist, is most consistent with true honor and wisdom, will be doubted by few now, and by none hereafter.

But the plea of *necessity*, is no less false in fact, than it is unsound in principle. It is not true, that the refusal to give or receive a challenge, necessarily occasions a loss of reputation, or leads to subsequent indignities. The ancient judicial combats to which duelling probably owes its origin, were regarded as appeals to Heaven, and the issue was supposed to be providential. By the laws of England, which formerly recognized these combats, the parties or their champions, previous to the combat, made oath of the justice of their cause, and the vanquished was deemed convicted of perjury, and was forever after incapable of serving as a juror or witness. Hence we may easily conceive, that it might have been disgraceful to decline the wager of battle, since the refusal might be imputed to a consciousness of guilt. But modern duellists, far from intending an appeal to heaven, seem to



forget, that the eye of Omniscience is resting upon them. Hence the only motive for declining a duel, that can possibly be esteemed disgraceful, is a fear of personal injury; and even this motive is only unworthy, because higher and nobler ones ought to operate. Still we do not hesitate to assert, in contradiction to all the declamation of duellists, that this practice is not necessary to preserve an honorable reputation. Innumerable are the instances, both in private and public life, of men of high character, treating insults and calumnies with silent contempt, or appealing to the laws for redress, without experiencing the slightest diminution in their respectability or influence.\* Not a solitary case can be adduced, in which a man has lowered himself in public estimation, by declining a duel from a sense of duty.

It may however be urged, that although a man professedly religious, may be excused from fighting, yet in other cases, a refusal can be ascribed only to cowardice, and must therefore of course, be considered disgraceful. And is it the christian alone who shrinks from shedding human blood; or who admits the ex-

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\*A gentleman in the State of New-York, was some years since publicly assaulted by a political opponent, and knocked down—no challenge ensued, but an appeal was made to the laws, and damages awarded, to the amount of \$3,000. Not the slightest stigma ever rested on the character of this gentleman for not demanding the ordinary "satisfaction." In the last war, he held a high commission, and was distinguished for his chivalrous bravery.

Another gentleman was attacked in one of our cities, by a person to whom he had given offence, and struck with a cane—His principles did not permit him to attempt to expiate the insult in the blood of the aggressor, but so far was his respect for the laws of his Maker and his Country, from tarnishing his reputation, that he was afterwards elected a Member of Congress, and at the present time, enjoys in no ordinary degree, the esteem and confidence of his fellow-citizens,

istence and attributes of a Supreme Being, and the possibility of a future state of retribution? Is the heart warmed with piety towards God, the only heart in which parental or conjugal affection ever glows? The duellist will not readily make these admissions; but unless he makes them, he must confess that even an infidel may have many and powerful motives for declining a duel, wholly distinct from any apprehension of personal danger.

Still it is contended, that to avoid a duel, from a reluctance to hazard life, is cowardly, and that he who is not restrained by religious principles, or family considerations, must fight when insulted or challenged, or be forever disgraced.

The incorrectness of this assertion is proved by the almost daily instances, of men passing over in silence the insults offered to them, without forfeiting their honorable standing in society; and without pleading either religious or domestic restraints, as an apology for their conduct.

That cowardice is disgraceful is true, but the application of this maxim to the present subject, adds another to the numerous instances, in which serious errors have resulted from the use of words in a vague, indefinite sense. Where is the duellist, who, assailed by a dangerous disease, would think it cowardly to save his life by using the prescribed remedies; or who, if a spectator at a shooting match, would disdain to stand without the range of the shot, lest his courage might be suspected? If a desire to avoid pain and death be cowardly, all mankind are cowards. A du-

ellist thinks it no disgrace to decline fighting with unusual weapons, because they would expose him to still greater danger. It is not therefore an unwillingness to hazard life, or an anxiety to preserve it, that constitutes cowardice. He alone is a coward, who forms an unreasonable and exaggerated estimate of danger; or who refuses to encounter it at the call of duty. Before therefore a man can be deemed a coward, for not consenting to be a mark to be shot at, it must be proved, either, that he exaggerates the risk he would run, or that by withholding his consent, he is violating some paramount obligation.

Duelling is said to afford "satisfaction." As the advocates of this practice are unwilling to admit that they are actuated by a passion so odious as revenge, they profess to use the term "satisfaction," in the sense of "vindication." An insult has been offered, and a challenge ensues, not avowedly to revenge the insult, but to prove that it was underserved, and also to prevent its repetition. To pretend that *such* is in fact, the satisfaction afforded by a duel, is to insult the common sense, and daily experience of mankind. The insult we will suppose, is a charge of want of veracity, or integrity. This it is evident cannot be disproved, either by giving a challenge, or by the result of the duel. If the charge was believed by the community, surely that belief will not be shaken, by the evidence afforded by the accused of his disregard of morality, in seeking the life of a fellow being—He who should propose to test the title to his estate, by challenging the claimant, would not be guilty of greater folly, than



he who appeals to arms, to disprove a charge implicating his character. Every individual in society, is exposed to the insults and calumnies of the envious and malignant, and the only rational and satisfactory vindication, is an exposition of facts and motives. No duellist has ever yet been successful, either in establishing, or maintaining a reputation for honor and rectitude, by fighting his enemies ; nor can an instance be mentioned, in which the favour and confidence of the public has been founded on a duel.

In a disquisition like the present, it would be indecorous to seek for illustrations in private anecdotes ; or to cite the examples of particular duellists, in proof of our assertions. All who have been conversant with the history and characters of such of our public men, as have engaged in duels, must have observed that the “satisfaction” which they have demanded and received, has in no case, amounted to “vindication”—that the same charges have been brought against them after the duel, as before, and with equal confidence and boldness ; and that the stains on their reputation, which they had attempted to wash off with blood, have invariably been found indelible.

It has been maintained, that duels prevent personal indignities ; and that insults will not readily be offered to him, who it is known, will resent them. It would indeed be a singular anomaly in human nature, were it true, that the indulgence of revenge, and the practice of violence, had a tendency to promote personal security. He, who is ready to rob his neighbour of life, will not probably feel much compunction, in

assailing his person, or reputation. If duelling did indeed tend to prevent insults, we might expect that those portions of our country in which duels are most frequent, would be distinguished for the peaceful and forbearing demeanour of their citizens; while others, in which the practice is unknown, would be perpetually disturbed by brawls and outrages. If however we compare the state of society in New-England for instance, with that in some other sections of the union, we shall be disposed to doubt, whether duelling does indeed exercise that soothing influence over human passions which has been ascribed to it.

In answer to all that has been said, it may be replied, that men highly esteemed in society for their virtues and honorable characters, have thought themselves compelled to engage in duels; and that it is therefore evident that the malignity and guilt attributed to this practice, must be in a great measure, only imaginary. Truth requires the admission, that men of whom better things might have been expected, have been concerned in duels. But let it be remembered, that the criminality of an act, depends not on the character of him who commits it, but on the precepts of Him, who is the judge of all; and likewise, that the best of men, are still frail, and liable to be led astray by temptation, and by the violence of their passions. The cause of duelling, will not however derive strength from an investigation into the characters of its advocates. If a few men of fair reputations have committed this crime, it will not be denied by such as are willing to yield to the testimony of daily observa-

tion, that the great mass of duellists, are men of loose morals; and are chiefly to be found in the class of selfish politicians, debauchees, or gamblers. Duellists are pleased to term their combats, "affairs of honor," but unless honor be distinct from moral rectitude, there is reason to believe, that the number of honorable duellists, is extremely small. On this point there is probably but little difference in public opinion, and it would be difficult to find a man, not even excepting duellists themselves, who would regard the circumstance of his friend's having fought a duel, an additional inducement for appointing him the guardian of his children, or the executor of his estate.

If it be admitted that duels have been fought, by men of high and deserved reputation, it must also be admitted that this reputation, was neither acquired, nor preserved by the practice. It is a singular and unhappy mistake, that public opinion renders duelling necessary. It is unfortunately true, that public opinion does not so far discountenance it, as to exclude from public confidence, all who practice it; but it is also true, that no man is esteemed trusted or elevated to office, *because he is a duellist*; and he who would enjoy the favour of the public, must offer some other pledges of his character, than that he has hazarded his own life, and attempted that of another.

We will in conclusion, appeal to the duellist himself. Some slight and unguarded expression, or some uncourteous action, which if not noticed by himself, would probably be unheeded by others, fires his resentment, and prompts him to demand satisfaction:



his challenge is accepted, and instead of wreaking his vengeance on his opponent he falls himself! Is it possible for human folly to exhibit itself in more glaring and disgusting colours? The assassin if not less guilty, is at least far less foolish. He seeks revenge and obtains it, whereas the duellist pursues his object by means which expose himself to precisely the same fate as that, to which he is desirous of consigning his enemy.

But we will suppose that the duellist is called to the field by an insult of the most aggravated nature—that his aim is true, and that the injury he has received, is effaced in the life's blood of the offender: and now we would ask him, what is the "satisfaction" he has obtained? His character, so far as its integrity or veracity was implicated, remains unchanged, except that it is now stained with blood. He has we admit, evinced a firmness of nerve which perhaps had never been questioned, but which however he possesses in common with multitudes of the vilest of his species. He has exhibited a physical quality, which of itself gives him no claim to the respect and confidence of his fellow-men. He has indeed gratified his revenge, he has deprived his enemy of life, and all its enjoyments—he has cut short the period of probation allotted to him by his Creator, for securing the felicities, and avoiding the miseries of the eternal world; and as far as man is permitted to judge, he has sent his immortal soul, to those regions of despair, into which hope never enters. He has perhaps entailed poverty and wretchedness upon an amiable woman, widowed by his hand; and upon a family of helpless innocents, robbed by

him, of a father's tenderness and protection. Yes, his revenge is complete—its superabundant fulness might extort a smile from him, who was a murderer from the beginning. But does the duellist find no bitter ingredients mingled in the delicious cup from which he is quaffing? Alas, the revenge in which he is delighting, has been purchased at a price, in comparison with which, all the wealth, and honors, and pleasures of the world, are but as the dust of the balance. When the storm of passion has subsided—when the bustle of business, and the excitements of the world shall have given place to sober and retired reflection, Conscience will resume her empire, and her still small voice will appal his soul, by the awful and tremendous truths it will reveal. The wretchedness and desolation of which he has been the author, will rise to his view in all their aggravated horrors ; and in the silent watches of the night, his affrighted imagination will hear his brother's blood crying from the ground to Him, who hath promised to avenge. As the infirmities of age, and the inroads of disease, remind him of his mortality, his thoughts will reluctantly wander beyond the tomb, and a judgment to come, will force itself upon his reflections. Should divine grace soften his heart and enlighten his understanding, deep and bitter will be his penitence, mingled however with hope and consolation ; but should this mercy be denied him, the agonies of dissolution will be aggravated by the reproaches of conscience, and a fearful anticipation of the realities of the unseen world ;—and when the last pulse shall have beaten, and the last sigh been heaved,

his spirit will stand before that Almighty Being, whose favour he had scorned, and whose most solemn injunctions, he had deliberately transgressed. To this dread tribunal, we will not presume to follow him; but most earnestly would we entreat every duellist to apply to himself, the momentous question put by the Son of God, "What will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul."

*FINIS.*

















